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Magdalene Pfister

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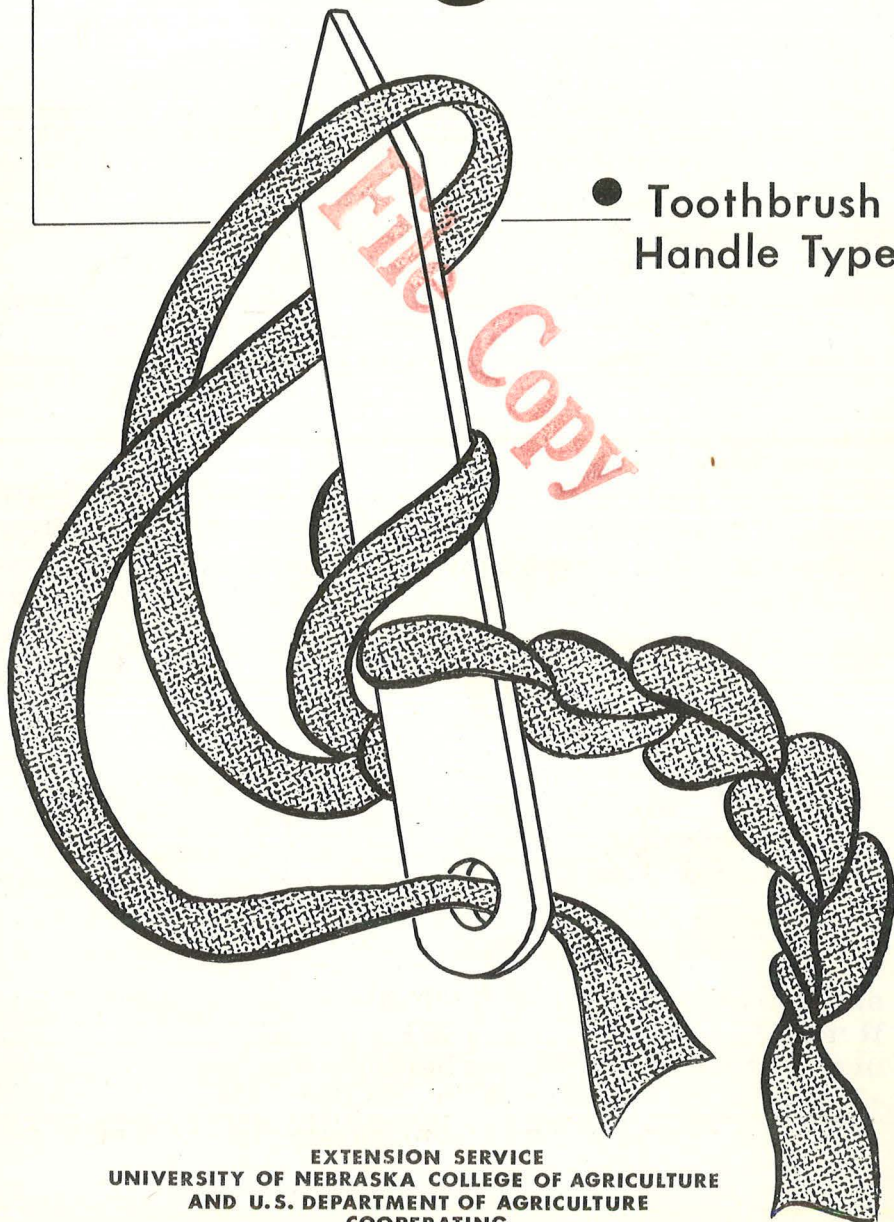
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EC. 56-1118

● handmade rugs



● Toothbrush
Handle Type

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Handmade Rugs

Toothbrush Handle Type

Magdalene Pfister

The toothbrush handle rug gets its name from the tool with which it is worked--an old toothbrush handle, whittled down. The method makes a fine, sturdy, reversible rug and is particularly suitable for using cotton-fabric leftovers, such as percale and denim. The rug can be made in hit-and-miss strips, or color may be worked in at regular intervals to produce a definite pattern. The shape of this kind of rug is always oval.

A handmade rug should be worth the time and effort put into it. More time is required to collect, sort and prepare the materials than to construct the rug. A definite plan for the entire rug should be made before the work is started.

The Rug Must Lie Flat

A handmade rug must be heavy enough to lie flat on the floor. The stitches and rows must be close and tight so the rug will be very firm and so there will be no open places in it.

The way the colors are distributed influences the appearance of flatness. The rug will appear flatter if colors that blend are used rather than colors that are in strong contrast to each other. It is better to use medium-to-dark-tones rather than bright ones.

Plan the Size and Shape

Rugs should be made to fit the place in which they are to be used. The size of the place determines the size and shape of the rug.

Some examples of good proportion are:

24 inches by 36 inches or 2 to 3 proportion

36 inches by 60 inches or 3 to 5 proportion

45 inches by 63 inches or 5 to 7 proportion

In planning an oval rug the length of the center strip determines the length and width of the finished rug. In order to estimate the length for the center, first determine the size of the finished rug. Then subtract the width of the rug from the length of the rug for the approximate length of the center strip. It is well to add 3 or 4 inches to this estimated length, as the original strip will become shorter when the adjoining rows are attached to it.

For example: for a rug 27 inches by 45 inches,
 $45 \text{ inches} - 27 \text{ inches} = 18 \text{ inches}$, the estimated length.

$18 \text{ inches} + 4 \text{ inches (allowance)} = 22 \text{ inches}$,
length to make center braid.

Plan the Colors

The color scheme for a rug must be carefully planned before the rug is started. The all-over or hit-and-miss color scheme is best for this type of rug because it is impossible to avoid the jags in the rows when there is a definite color change. Even this must have a plan if the rug is to harmonize with the other furnishings in the room and if it is to appear flat.

A color scheme of two or three colors, or several tones of one color, is easier to achieve than one of many colors. If both warm and cool colors are used in a rug a larger amount of one type should be used. There

should be a predominance of medium or dark tones when several tones of one color are used as the basis for the color scheme. A good proportion for a three-color scheme is 50 percent of the dominant color, 35 percent of another, and 15 percent of a third.

The dominant color need not be the darkest color. In order to distribute the dominant color throughout all parts of the rug, insert a strand of this color at frequent intervals. At first the strand may be long enough to make only four or five stitches. As the rug gets larger, the strand may be longer and the last few rows of the rug may be entirely of this background color..

Collect Enough Material

It takes a long time to collect enough material of the right weight and of suitable colors to make a rug. Select materials that will stand the hard wear to which rugs are subjected.

A guide to the amount of material required is:

3 square yards of material weigh about 1 pound
1 pound of medium-weight wool makes about 1 square foot.

An oval rug 30 inches by 45 inches uses approximately 15 house dresses and shirts.

Preparing the Material

Any necessary cleaning and dyeing should be done before the material is cut into strips.

Cut or tear fabric with grain of material into strips about 1 1/2 inches wide. These when folded are called the "weaver."

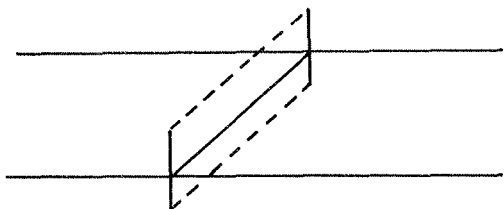
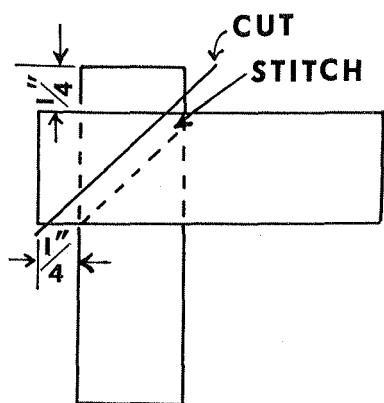


Figure 1.

Join ends on diagonal, making a continuous strip about 1 1/2 yards long -- a good working length. (Figure 1).

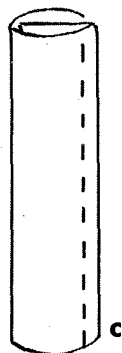
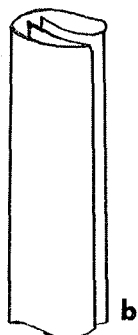
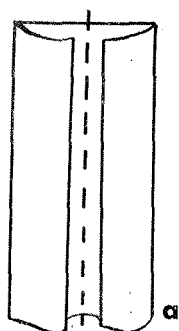


Figure 2.

Fold in raw edges to meet in the center (Fig. 2a) and press. Fold strip in half, lengthwise with raw edges inside (Fig. 2b). Machine-stitch close to the open edge with matching thread, using long machine stitch (Fig. 2c). Leave 2 or 3 inches unstitched at ends for future joining.

Roll prepared strips into balls. Unless a completely hit-and-miss effect is desired, each color should be prepared separately. Then, when you wish to change color, simply cut off the old strip and join new one with diagonal seam, and hold unstitched edges in place until joining is completed.

Make the Needle

Break off head of toothbrush at neck. Sand or file broken end of handle to slender, smooth point. In other end of handle, use a rattail file or penknife to enlarge hole to an oval shape so fabric strips may pass through easily.

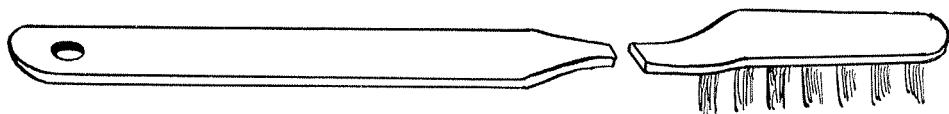
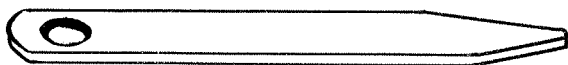


Figure 3.



Start the Center Strip

To estimate length of starting braid at center of this oval rug, first decide the size rug you wish to make. Then subtract width from length and add 4 inches. This sum is the length you should make the starting braid. (See page 2.)

Make the center braid from three strands of 2-inch width strips.

1. Place the three strips one on top of the other, and whip the ends together firmly with a shallow stitch.

2. Make a fairly firm braid, folding the outer strands forward to make a smooth edge.

3. Test the braid by inserting the needle through the loops along the edge of the braid. The needle should go through the braid but not too easily.

4. Make the braid the desired length (length of rug minus width of rug plus 4 inches).

5. End the braid by overlapping the three strips, placing the end of a weaver (the folded and stitched strip) on top and stitching the four strips together very firmly. The end of the braid must be as firm as the rest of it.

Weaving the Rug

1. Thread needle with weaver.

2. Hold the end of the braid to which the weaver is attached in a horizontal position, between the thumb and index finger of the left hand. Let the braid extend to the right (Fig. 4).

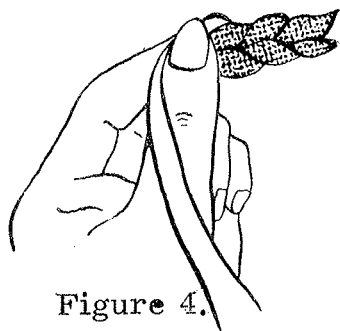


Figure 4.

3. Insert the needle through the first loop on the top edge of the braid. Always point the needle upward and to the left (Fig. 5).

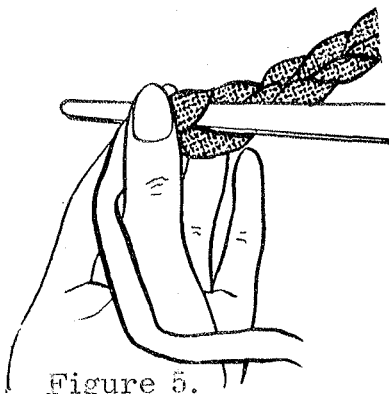


Figure 5.

4. Draw the needle through until the weaver forms a loose loop around the thumb (Fig. 6).

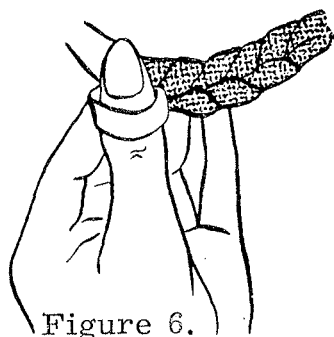


Figure 6.

Second Step

1. Bring the weaver around the thumb, from the left.

2. Insert the needle through the same (first) loop of the braid and twist the thumb-loop to form a "figure-8" around the point of the needle. (This is similar to casting on stitches when knitting.) There are now two loops on the needle (Fig. 7).

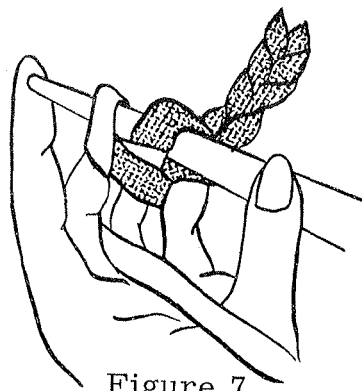


Figure 7.

3. Hold the two loops between the thumb and fingers, and draw needle through until the weaver forms a fairly loose loop around the thumb. Keep the weaver flat. Note: There is now one loop around the weaver back of the thumb.

Third Step

1. Bring the weaver down across the thumb from the left.

2. Insert the point of the needle through:
 - the second loop on the top of the braid.
 - the loop on the weaver back of the thumb.
 - the thumb-loop twisted over the point of the needle to form a figure-8.

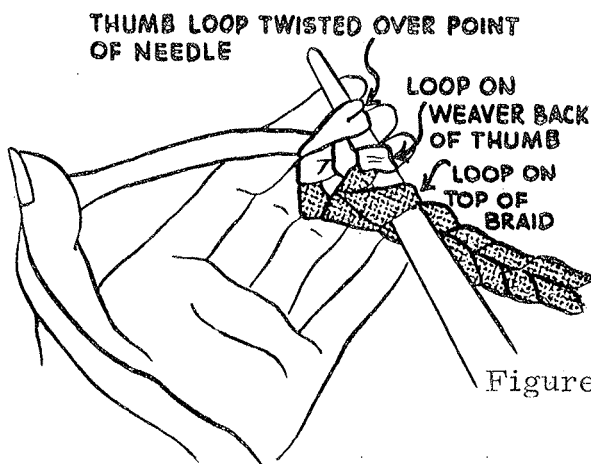


Figure 8.

There are now three loops on the needle (Fig. 8).

3. Hold the three loops between the thumb and fingers. Draw the needle through until the weaver forms a fairly loose loop around the thumb. Note: There are now two loops on the weaver back of the thumb.

Fourth Step

1. Bring the weaver down across the thumb from the left.

2. Insert the point of the needle through:

--the third loop in the braid,

--the left top loop on the weaver back of the thumb.

--the thumb-loop twisted over the point of the needle.

There will always be three loops on the needle at this point.

3. Hold the three loops between the thumb and fingers, and draw the needle through until the weaver forms a fairly loose loop around the thumb. Twist the needle a turn to the right as it is drawn through fingers.

Repeat the fourth step, taking a stitch in every loop along the top of the braid, until you come to the last two loops in this side of the braid.

Put two stitches into each of the last two loops in the top of the braid, keeping the thumb-loop much looser than it has been. These extra stitches help to keep the rug flat.

Turn the braid around and continue down the other edge of the braid.

Put two stitches in the first and second loops on this edge of the braid. Always point the needle upward and to the left.

Put one stitch in each loop along the braid until you come to the last two loops of the braid.

Put two stitches in each of these last two loops in the braid, leaving the thumb-loop looser.

The stitches from here on will be in the loops along the edge of the rug. There is a ridge on the side of the rug away from you. Always keep the same side of the rug facing you.

Precautions

1. Keep the weaver flat at all times. See that the weaver is straight before taking a stitch. Twist the needle one turn to the right as it is drawn through the loop in the rug.

2. Keep the thumb-loop fairly loose. Keep it very loose on the curves.

3. Prevent the rug from cupping by:

--adding extra stitches at the curves and along the sides, as needed.

--pressing and shaping the rug on a flat surface from time to time.

4. When you stop work, pull the thumb-loop up to form a large loop or leave the three loops on the needle. This insures a correct start when you resume your work.

To Finish

When the rug is as large as you want it to be, plan to stop on the curve, just after you have gone around the end of the rug. To make a tapered finish do not pick up the loop on the weaver back of the thumb--insert the needle through the loop in the rug, then twist the thumb-loop over the point of the needle.

Make one or two stitches, using only the two loops on the needle.

Make one or two blanket stitches with the weaver.

Cut off the weaver, allowing a short end to tuck under the next loop in the rug.

Fasten the end securely with needle and thread.

Cover the rug with a damp cloth and press with an iron.

Alternate Method

If the material is too heavy, the toothbrush handle rug may be made by using two loops on the needle instead of the three loops:

1. Bring the weaver down across the thumb from the left.
2. Insert the needle through:
 - the loop along the top of the braid,
 - the thumb-loop twisted over the point of the needle.
3. Hold the two loops between the thumb and fingers, and draw the needle through until the weaver forms a fairly loose loop around the thumb.

Instead of using a braid to start the center strip, a single chain may be made by pulling one loop through the other and the thumb slipped through the last loop when the desired length is reached. Then the remaining length can be threaded and used as the weaver.

* Much of the information used in this circular was taken from a bulletin prepared by Ruth J. Peck and Jessie Marion, Extension Specialists in Home Furnishings, Michigan State University Extension Service.